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I personally requested involvement in armed action. Why? My upbringing and presence in the countryside had something to do with it. My family had stayed in the Lebanese south for a long time. Whereas most Palestinians were removed away from the border areas by the Lebanese state, we managed to stay. My father was friends with a Lebanese leader from the Safi al-Din family (Abdel Hashem Safi al-Din), so we remained near the border. At any rate, I felt that some sort of activity was taking place within the Movement of Arab Nationalists. I couldn't really see anything taking place, but I sensed that there was military activity. At the end, they admitted to that and said: "Welcome. We are willing to allow you to participate in military work, but on a strictly clandestine basis".

Thus began the military action phase. Our units back then, between 1963 and 1964, were known as *Shabab al-Tha'ar* (The Young Avengers), which was the armed wing of the Movement of Arab Nationalist. Within Palestinian circles at the time, this was the only formation adopting military work, albeit within certain limits. We started as small groups and began to establish anchor points. These could be houses or caves etc... in which our weapons, clothes, or other items could be stored before and after operations are launched. We selected two anchor points in the south: the village of Um el-Tout, and a valley that was called Wadi al-Salhaani.

We began to prepare in this manner. At that stage, how did military work look like? We did not carry any weapons except on the border. We would prepare and load our weapons only after crossing the border and entering the Occupied Territories. We had strict instructions not to load any weapons on Lebanese territory. This was to avoid clashes with the Lebanese Army, Gendarmes, or any other units. Clashes with any Arab forces were strictly forbidden.

The weapons were bought secretly by designated people. As field cadres working on our special mission, we had no role in procurement, other than to receive the weapons. Our task was to enter the Palestinian territories, for reconnaissance purposes only: photographing bridges, settlements, Israeli sensitive areas, concentration points etc... This was how it all started.

Back then, the border was marked by stones known as "Qaqour". You would find lines formed out of this stone here and there, for 20 meters or 50 meters,

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sprayed with white lime. There was no barbed wire or anything like that. Border patrols would pass by, every hour or hour and a half, both during the day and in the evening. In those days, we used to go in naturally. The first time I entered Palestine it was at night. You know, in the abstract, entry to Palestine has an intimidating air to it (the country, the Israelis and their army, and the awe of just being in the homeland etc...), but when we entered the border and continued walking I didn't even know that I was in the land of Palestine!

This was in 1964. I was exactly in the vicinity of Al-Qarn River, which is located north of Tarshiha, passing between its lands and those of Tarbikha and the surrounding areas, so it is approximately 30 km inside. We were doing our patrol at night, and the commander of the reconnaissance unit that I was in (by the way I was the youngest member in this group)...This commander, martyr Nizam Assaf, told me: "Do you know where you are?" I said no. I still thought that we were walking in Lebanon. He said: "you are 35km inside the Occupied Territories". Of course we were, for we could see the lights of the settlements etc... When he told me, I felt afraid, I felt that... In any case, we rested for a bit, and then started walking again. I was hit by a tree branch or something, and I started thinking that an Israeli had grabbed me. Also, in this area at night, one starts to hear bird noises and so on. For a certain amount of time, I was beset by internal fear. But then I started telling myself that I have been walking for 35 kilometres and nothing happened, so why am I afraid now? A few kilometres later, fear was over, and things became normal. This was the era of reconnaissance units. Imagine, we used to avoid any clashes with the Israelis, and if we bumped into any of their units we would escape and not allow them to see us. We did not clash with the enemy at all. Our task was to gather information during this early period.

Then the second phase began, which witnessed progression towards a new understanding that was very useful and important. We decided that we must find groups of our compatriots who had remained inside Palestine in the villages that survived. We started thinking about the ways we could establish groups on that side of the border. So we started to search for those who had relatives or friends, and we sought information from the older men. We formed in this period groups inside the occupied homeland in the western Galilee, the area that is not far from the coast. Places like Umm al-Faraj, the coastal villages, Tarshiha, Ma'alia, Safoutya etc... We mostly selected shepherds, and we would find them and recruit them in the wilderness.

This phase of action commenced, and then we started to ask feel: "OK, we are forming groups, but what do we want from this? What is required next and

next?" To be honest, I discovered then that all this work we were doing and effort we were putting in was for the benefit of the Egyptian intelligence. The idea was that we would go and collect information for the Arab states, so that they could then liberate the homeland. But then it turned out that the Arab states did not want to liberate the homeland or anything like that..

Then came 1965 and something called Al-Asifa appeared. Asifa, Asifa, Asifa, no body new what that was! Within the Movement of Arab Nationalists, we decided to organise groups that would enter Al-Asifa to see what it's about. At the time, people were selected from Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon etc... to do just that. I was chosen, and I was trying to decide whether I should go or not. Al-Asifa was the Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fateh), so I entered Fateh and I went along with a group of young men. One of them was called Mohammad and he was from Rashidiyeh camp. Another one was Nimer Kreidi who was in the Ba'ath party, and there was also Suheil who was, like me, from Movement of Arab Nationalists. He was originally from Rashidiyeh camp but he now lives in Ain al-Hilweh. So we travelled in a group of four or five to the border and they took us from the border straight into al-Hameh Camp in Syria. The training then began...